



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

January 22, 2002

Representative Kelli Linville
Chair, House Agriculture and Ecology Committee
John L. O'Brien Building
2nd Floor, Room 207-A
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Representative Linville,

I am writing to share with you my support and concerns regarding the donation of free food to charitable organizations under rules and recommended health and safety guidelines to be established by the State Board of Health, as outlined in HB 2325.

In my capacity as a State Board of Health member, and as a member of the Food Safety Advisory Committee of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, I support the donation of food from and to approved kitchens (as defined in Chapter 246-215), such as the kitchens in professional restaurants, shelters, food banks, and other charitable organizations. These approved kitchens are monitored and are generally found to provide food handling, preparation, processing, and storage conditions that protect public health. They play an important role in the safe distribution of food to the state's needy residents.

The Board will need to balance allowing organizations and individuals to provide food to needy populations with protecting public health, however. Some members of the public health community will be particularly concerned about the safety of food that is prepared in private homes for distribution to the public. Some feel that allowing individuals to donate certain types of food, regardless of their well-intended motives, might put the public's health at risk from food-borne illnesses from pathogens such as *E.coli* 0157:H7 or *salmonella*.

If HB2325 legislation passes, the Board will consider these concerns, along with others, when developing rules and recommended health and safety guidelines for food donation. The Board looks forward to assistance from the Department of Health, local health jurisdictions, charitable organizations, and other interested parties in developing a rule that enables well-meaning organizations and businesses to donate food to our state's needy populations while continuing to protect the public from the risk of food-borne illness. This process will require additional resources for meetings and Board staff time.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Carl Osaki
Chair, Environmental Health Committee



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cc: Members and Staff of the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee
Members of the Washington State Board of Health